

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 15, 2012

**Georgia Governor's Executive Order Says  
USGBC Unfairly Awards Its Wood Certification Credit**

WASHINGTON, DC – The Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc.® (SFI®) applauds the Governor of Georgia for urging broader recognition of forest certification standards. An [executive order](#) signed on August 10 by Governor Nathan Deal promotes the use of products from responsibly managed forests in Georgia in state construction.

The executive order states that “any new or expanded state building shall incorporate ‘Green Building’ standards that give certification credits equally to forest products grown, manufactured, and certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, the American Tree Farm System, and the Forest Stewardship Council.” The introduction to the Governor’s order notes that “the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED rating system unfairly awards its wood certification credit only to products certified to the Forest Stewardship Council standard,” and that “recognizing all forest certifications equally will help promote sustainable forestry in the State of Georgia and help create thousands of jobs while maintaining our strong outdoor heritage.”

The president of the Georgia Forestry Association, Steve McWilliams, says the governor’s executive order removes obstacles that devalue wood grown and milled in Georgia.

“We are proud of the leadership shown by Governor Deal on behalf of Georgia’s timber growers and wood product manufacturers,” McWilliams said. “Given the current depressed markets for building materials, there is less incentive for growers to keep their land in trees, and that poses a threat to the environmental and economic benefits that flow from Georgia’s timberlands. Governor Deal’s action supports the proud tradition of forestry in Georgia, protects forest communities, and promotes job opportunities. ”

Three-quarters of North America’s certified forests, and almost 99% of Georgia’s certified forests, are certified to SFI or the American Tree Farm System®, and therefore ineligible for LEED’s certified wood credit. “We applaud Governor Deal’s action for recognizing certified wood and forest products are critical to the future of our forests, economic development, and environmental well-being,” stated Kathy Abusow, SFI President and CEO. “Fifteen Governors have now sent a strong message to USGBC. It’s time USGBC listened to the urging of elected officials, federal agencies, state foresters, landowners, conservation groups and academics to stop discriminating against well-managed domestic forests.”

Georgia’s action comes on the heels of other government officials who have signaled support for all forest certification standards being used in green construction. The Governor of Maine in December, 2012, signed a similar executive order that called for the use of green building rating systems that give equal credit to all forest certification standards. The US Department of Agriculture announced a new program last year to promote wood in green building, stating, “Sustainability of forest products can be verified using any credible third-party rating system, such as Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, or American Tree Farm System Certification.” A total of 89 Members of Congress have also weighed in with the USGBC on the wood certification issue, including most recently a letter from eight members of Congress in May urging USGBC to “accept all credible forest management certification systems for qualification under the LEED rating system,” because it “will provide a great incentive for the utilization of domestically produced forest products.”



**About SFI:**

SFI Inc. is an independent non-profit charitable organization, and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program. Across North America, more than 195 million acres/79 million hectares are certified to the SFI forest management standard, making it the largest single forest standard in the world. SFI also promotes responsible forestry on millions of additional acres through SFI's certified sourcing requirements.

**CONTACT:**

Nadine Block  
Senior Director, Government Outreach  
SFI Inc.  
202-596-3456  
[nadine.block@sfiprogram.org](mailto:nadine.block@sfiprogram.org)